

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the thorough examination of the present application as evidenced by the Final Office Action of June 13, 2006. In particular, Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that Claims 12, 25-27, 31, 33 and 35 are allowed and Claims 2-11 and 18-23 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. *See* Final Office Action, pages 3-4. Accordingly, Applicants have amended Claim 1 to include the recitations of Claim 2 and Claim 2 has been cancelled from the present application. Claim 13 has also been amended to include the recitations of Claims 14 and 21 and Claims 14 and 21 have been cancelled from the present application. Applicants have also amended Claims 3-6, 9, 15, 22, 23 and 28 to conform the dependencies thereof to the cancellation of Claims 2, 14 and 21. Claims 36-47 have also been cancelled from the present application. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested in due course.

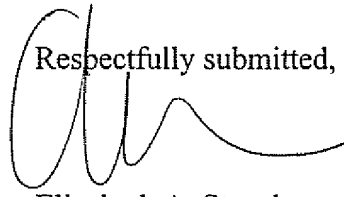
The Claim Rejections

Claims 1, 13-17, 24, 28-30, 32-34 and 36-47 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over United States Patent No. 6,342,177 to Howes. *See* Final Office Action, page 2. To expedite prosecution of this matter and without prejudice to Applicants' right to file a continuation application, the claims have been amended above to place this case in a form indicated as allowable. In particular, Claim 1 has been amended to include the recitations of Claim 2, and Claim 2 has been cancelled from the present application. Claim 13 has been amended to include the recitations of Claims 14 and 21 and Claims 14 and 21 have been cancelled from the present application. Furthermore, Claims 3-6, 9, 15, 22, 23 and 28 have been amended to conform the dependencies thereof to the cancellation of Claims 2, 14 and 21. Furthermore, Claims 36-47 have been cancelled from the present application. Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections should be withdrawn as obviated in light of these amendments. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance in due course.

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CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that pending claims are in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested in due course. Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (919) 854-1400.

Respectfully submitted,

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